

LAYING THE HAND ON THE SACRIFICE

NO. 2840

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*"And he shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering."
Leviticus 4:29*

I MIGHT have taken as my text several other verses in the same chapter, for they all express the same idea as the words I have just read to you. For the sake of emphasis, let me ask you to look at the fourth verse. When a priest had committed sin, and brought a sin offering unto the Lord, it is written, "He shall bring the bullock unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head."

The fifteenth verse tells us that when the whole congregation of Israel had sinned through ignorance, the Lord said to Moses, "The elders of the congregation shall lay their hands upon the head of the bullock before the LORD." Then, in the twenty-fourth verse, we read that when a ruler had sinned through ignorance, and brought his sin offering, "He shall lay his hand upon the head of the goat, and kill it in the place where they kill the burnt offering before the LORD." And in the thirty-third verse, you find that if a common person had committed a sin through ignorance, or if his sin should come to his knowledge, he was to bring a sin offering, and then it was added, "He shall lay his hand upon the head of the sin offering."

Any one of those verses would, therefore, have sufficed for a text. It seems to have been a necessary part of the proceedings that when a sin offering was presented to the Lord, to be offered up before Him, the offerer should first of all lay his hand upon the head of the animal devoted to this sacred purpose.

I hope I am addressing many persons who wish to know more about the way and plan of salvation, and who are anxious to partake in the benefits of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Possibly they are saying, "We know that there is a Savior for sinners, but how can He be ours? We know that an atonement has been made for sin, but how can that atonement really put away our sin so that we may be pardoned, and accepted by God?"

This is a very natural question, and a very proper one, it would be well if it were most solemnly and seriously asked by all who, as yet, remain without being partakers of the blessings which are stored up for us in Christ Jesus.

Beloved friends, it will be all in vain, so far as we are personally concerned, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," unless He shall save us. It will be of no avail to us that Jesus shed His precious blood unless that blood washes away our guilt. It will increase rather than diminish our misery if we hear that others are saved so long as we ourselves remain unsaved. If we are finally lost, it will not make our lot in hell any more tolerable if we discover that there was a propitiation for sin, although we never had a share in its expiatory effects.

Of all questions in the world, it does seem to me that this is the most urgent and pressing one, and that we ought not to rest until we get it satisfactorily answered, and put into practice—"How can I be a partaker in the eternal life which Jesus Christ came into the world to procure for sinners by His death?"

Some of you have up hitherto totally neglected this question. If you had noticed, in *The Times*, an advertisement stating that somebody's next of kin was wanted, and you had a suspicion that you were the person to whom the notice referred, I warrant you that you would not have let the grass grow under your feet, you would have been quick enough to secure the fortune which had been left by your relative.

But now that Jesus Christ has died, and left a wondrous legacy of grace among the sons of men, you have allowed a good many years to roll over your head without making an eager and earnest search into the question whether there is anything for you. You have seen a great many persons saved all around you, yet you remain unsaved.

You have some of your dear ones who are in heaven, but you are not pursuing the path which will lead you thither, and all this while you have not had the excuse, which many have had, of never having heard that there was a great Savior and great salvation to be had without money and without price. If you could plead such an excuse as that, it would be better for you than it is now, when you are sinning against light and knowledge in neglecting that which would be most of all for your spiritual and eternal good.

Be wise now therefore. You have been trifling far too long. Be serious now, and bend your whole mind to the earnest consideration at this all-important matter, “How can I obtain salvation? How can I get it here and now? How can sin be pardoned? How can my sins be pardoned now? I have long heard of Christ, how can I come into vital communion with Him? I know that—

*“There is a fountain fill’d with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;—*

“but how can I be washed therein so that I, personally, may become whiter than snow?”

My text says that the guilty person who brought the sin offering, laid his hand upon its head, and this act gives a pictorial and symbolical answer to your questions, and tells you how you can come into connection with Christ, and how His great sacrifice can become available for you. You have to do to Christ, spiritually, what these Hebrews did literally, you have to imitate their action, and so carry out those words of Dr. Watts which we often sing—

*“My faith would lay her hand
On that dear head of Thine
While like a penitent I stand
And there confess my sin.”*

I shall speak of only two things which we may learn from my text. The first is *the intent of this symbol*, and the second is, *the simplicity of the symbol*—this laying of the hand of the offerer upon the head of the victim presented by him to God as a sin offering.

I. First, then, let me try to explain THE INTENT OF THE SYMBOL.

What did it mean? For these things, of which I shall speak in explaining this symbol, are necessary in order that Christ should become yours. Follow me very carefully and prayerfully, dear friend, if you do indeed desire to be saved, for it may be that the Lord will lead you into everlasting life even while I am speaking. I pray that He may do so.

The first meaning of this laying of the hand upon the head of the sacrifice is this, *it was a confession of sin*. The offering was a sin offering, but for sin, it would not have been needed. The man who came, and laid his hand on the head of the sin offering, acknowledged, by that act and deed, that he was a sinner.

If there had been anyone who was not a sinner, he would have had no right to be there. A sin offering, for a person who had no connection with sin, would have been a superfluity, why should he bring a sin offering to the Lord?

So, dear friends, if you have no sin, you are not fit subjects for Christ’s saving power and grace. If you are not guilty, you do not need forgiveness. If you have never transgressed the law of God, you need not come before Him with a sin offering. Only remember that if you do think so, you are under one of the most sorrowful delusions that ever entered the brain of a madman. You are deceiving yourself, depend upon it. If you say that you have no sin, the truth is not in you. But he who brought a sin offering

before the Lord said, in effect, "This is what I need, for I am a sinner. I need to have my sins taken away, for I am guilty in the sight of God. So I put my hand upon this lamb, or goat, or bullock, which is about to die, thereby confessing that I need a sacrifice in order that the sin, which I confess that I have committed, may be put away."

Are you reluctant to confess that you are a sinner? If so, I pray very earnestly that you may speedily get rid of that reluctance. God does not ask you to confess your sins to any man. It would be a shame for you to do so, for you would pollute that man, whoever he might be, if you poured into his ear the sad tale of your filthiness and sin. God does not ask you to do any man the serious wrong of whispering into his ear the foul story of your transgressions.

It is not to your fellow creature, but to your God, that you are to confess your sin. Go straight to Him, and say, as the prodigal said to his father, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight." What makes you so slow to do that? Do you imagine that He does not know about your sin, and think that you can hide anything from Him? That is impossible, for "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Is it your pride that keeps you from confessing your sin? How can you hope that God will forgive you if you will not acknowledge that you have sinned against Him?

Think how you act towards your own children. How ready you are to again clasp them to your bosom when they have offended against you! Yet you watch to see in them signs of relenting and repenting. So does the Lord your God watch for tokens of contrition and godly sorrow in you. Wherefore, "take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." Are you not willing to do this? Then, alas! you lack the first requisite for obtaining acceptance through Christ. How can you, who will not own that you have sinned, lay your hand upon the head of the sin offering?

He who thus confessed his sin, confessed also that he deserved to die, just as that victim was about to be slain. There stood the priest, with his sacrificial knife, ready to slay the innocent beast, and the basin in which to catch the blood of the bullock, or goat, or lamb, whichever it might be that was being offered, and he, who laid his hand upon its head, thereby said, "This poor animal is about to die, and to pour out its blood, and this reminds me that I deserve condign punishment from God. If He were to destroy me, He would be perfectly justified in doing so."

Soul, will you say that? Are you willing to humble yourself in the dust, and to say that? Will you put the halter about your neck and confess that you deserve the extreme penalty that the great Judge can inflict? If so, you have begun well, for he, who will confess his guilt, and will own that he deserves the punishment of death for it, has begun to put his hand upon the head of the great Sacrifice for sin.

Follow me a step further, and I trust that we may rejoice together that you, poor, guilty, self-condemned soul, have found deliverance through the one Sacrifice which God has provided for the putting away of sin. In the second place, the laying of the hand upon the head of the sin offering was *a consent to the plan of substitution*. He who had brought the victim laid his hand upon its head, and though he did not say so, yet his actions, being interpreted, meant, "God has ordained that this animal should take my place and I accept the divine appointment right heartily. I agree with Him that I should be pardoned through the offering of a sacrifice and that I should be accepted by God by reason of the shedding of the blood of a sacrificial victim."

Now, what say you to this plan, O Man? If the Jew was willing to let the death of the bullock, or the goat, or the lamb, typically stand for his own death, are you willing, with all your heart, to accept God's plan of salvation by the substitution of His only begotten Son suffering and dying in your stead? Surely you will not quarrel with this method of saving you if God sees it to be the right one.

Whenever my conscience has raised any question about the justice of this arrangement, it has always been quite a sufficient answer for me to say that if the thrice-holy JEHOVAH feels that the sacrifice of Christ, in the stead of sinners, is enough to vindicate His justice, I may well be satisfied with what satisfies Him.

Indeed, to question the righteousness of that method of saving the lost is to assail God upon a matter which lies very near His heart, and to attack that wondrous plan of redemption which is the last and highest display of all His divine attributes, for the system of substitution is the apex of the pyramid of God's revelation, the very highest point of the great mountain chain in which He has manifested His wisdom, power, love, mercy, and even His justice to the sons of men, "that he might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." O soul, if the Lord, who is offended, is satisfied with the expiation offered, you, certainly, need not be so foolish as to raise questions concerning it or to cavil at it!

Besides, if you will but think seriously about this matter, you will see that the justice of God is abundantly honored by Christ's standing in your stead. There is a well-known story of a school master, who had one boy in his school whom he could not keep in order by any ordinary discipline. He had threatened to punish him, and indeed, he had done so again and again, but still he remained incorrigible. At last he threatened that if a certain form of disobedience should be repeated, he would be publicly beaten.

The time soon came for the fulfillment of the threat, but the master could not bear that the boy should be punished, yet at the same time, he felt that the honor of the school, and the maintenance of his own authority in it required that it should be so. He told the lads that he was willing to spare the erring one, "yet," he said, "discipline will be at an end, my word will be broken, you will never believe in me again, and moreover, the school will be dishonored by this boy being allowed to act as he does without punishment."

Musing for a minute, he took down the ruler, put it into the hand of the disobedient boy, and then held out his own hand, bade the boy strike, and he received the punishment that was due to the culprit. The effect produced upon the boy was not a matter of surprise to those who know what fervent love will do. He offended no more, and the school was maintained in the highest possible condition of discipline.

This is a faint picture of what God has done. In the person of His well-beloved Son, He says, "I will suffer because you are guilty. Somebody must be punished for your sin, and if you suffer the just penalty for your evil deeds, it will crush you to the lowest hell. You cannot endure it, but I Myself will bare My shoulders to receive the stripes which are your due. I will take upon Myself your sins, my law shall have a terrible yet complete vindication, I shall be just, and yet I shall be able fully and freely to forgive you, and to accept you."

Nothing ever displayed all the attributes of God so gloriously—and especially His immutable justice—as the atoning death of His wellbeloved and only begotten Son, so, beloved let there be no question about your assenting to the plan of substitution. God is content with it. You yourself can see how it honors Him, so be satisfied with it. Do not be a skeptic, doubting and questioning.

There is an old proverb which says, "Don't quarrel with your bread and butter," but I may with even greater emphasis say, "Do not quarrel with your own salvation." If I must cavil at anything, surely I will not cavil against my own soul, and try to prove that I cannot be saved, putting my wits to work to show the absurdity of God's way of saving me. Oh, never, never let this be the case with you, but the rather, cheerfully accept what infinite wisdom has arranged!

Thus, you see, that the laying of the hand of the offerer on the head of the sacrifice meant the confession of sin, and consent to the way of salvation by substitution. It also meant a great deal more than that.

In the third place, it meant *the acceptance of that particular victim in the sinner's place*. By laying his hand upon it, he practically said, "This animal is to stand instead of me." Here is the main point, the essential point of the whole matter. Will you accept Christ as standing in your stead—the divine yet human Savior, perfect in His humanity, yet also perfect in His deity? He has lived, He has suffered, He has died, He has risen again, He has gone back into the glory at His Father's right hand. God has honored Him with full acceptance, will you also accept Him? The root of the matter lies there!

Oh, may His blessed Spirit sweetly guide your will so that you shall say, as I do, “Accept Him? Ah, blessed be His holy name that He permits me to accept Him! Surely I will do so, I will trust Him, He shall be mine.” If you have done so, then He is yours, for that is all He asks of you—to receive Him—to lay your hand upon Him and say, “There! Jesus Christ shall be the sacrifice for me, I will rest in Him, and in Him alone.”

I hope that I do not need to multiply words in urging this decision upon you, I trust that the softening influence of the Holy Spirit is already at work among you, leading some of you, who have delayed until now, to say, “We will accept Jesus as our Substitute, and accept Him now.” Why should you any longer delay to stretch forth your hand, and lay it upon Jesus, by faith, even as the offerer laid his hand upon the head of the sacrifice?

But this laying on of the hand meant even more than that, though that was the very essence of it all. It also meant *a belief in the transference of the sin*. He who laid his hand upon the sin offering did, as it were, as far as he could, put his sin from himself on to that bullock, or goat, or lamb, which was about to die, because it had become the sinner’s substitute. That laying on of his hand was a token of the transference of his guilt to the appointed victim, and if you will have Christ to be your Savior, you must believe that He, “His own self, bare our sins in His own body on the tree.”

Believe you this? Then, see what follows from it. Sin cannot be in two places at one time, if it is laid upon Jesus, it is taken off from you. If you do, in your very soul, accept Christ as your Substitute, then it is clear that the Lord has laid upon Him your iniquity, and therefore, your iniquity has passed away from you, and your sin is gone forever. Christ has taken all your iniquities, and carried them away where they shall never be mentioned against you any more forever!

Oh, what a blessed truth is this! If a man, who has been blind for fifty years could have his eyes opened, and could be taken out to see the stars, or to look up to the sun, how he would clap his hands and cry, “What a wondrous sight it is!” And I know that when I first perceived that Christ stood in my place, and that I stood in His place—that I was accepted because He was rejected, that I was beloved because He endured His Father’s wrath on my account—my soul felt as if it had never lived before, and had never known anything that was worth knowing till it perceived that wondrous truth. The Lord give you, dear heart, to perceive that it is even so in your case, for then you also will be truly glad.

That laying of the hand on the head of the sin offering also meant one thing more—it *was dependence, a leaning on the victim*. According to the Rabbis, the offerer was to lean with great pressure upon the bullock or the goat. If it was so, there is great significance about that act, for it teaches that you should depend like that upon Jesus, lean hard upon Him, lean with all your weight of sin, and all your load of iniquity, upon Him whom God has appointed to stand in the sinner’s stead. Accept Him as your Substitute, lean upon Him, rest upon Him. Say in your soul, “If I perish,”—though that can never be—“I will perish leaning upon Christ. He shall be my soul’s only Dependence.”

The Puritans speak of faith as a recumbency, a leaning. It needs no power to lean, it is a cessation from our own strength, and allowing our weakness to depend upon another’s power. Let no man say, “I cannot lean.” It is not a question of what you can do, but a confession of what you cannot do, and a leaving of the whole matter with Jesus. No woman could say, “I cannot swoon”—it is not a matter of power. Die into the life of Christ, let Him be All in all while you are nothing at all.

“Well,” says one, “but I can hardly think that I shall be saved simply by depending upon Christ.” Then, let me tell you that this was all that any of the saints of old ever had to depend upon, and this is all that any of the children of God, who are now alive, have to depend upon.

I bear my own personal testimony that my only hope for everlasting life lies in the death of Him who suffered in my stead. I have trusted in Him, I have accepted Him as standing in my place, gladly have I seen my sin transferred to Him and His righteousness transferred to me. I have no other hope, nor even the shadow of another hope. Prayers, tears, repentance, preaching, almsgiving, ay, and faith itself—all these put together are just nothing at all as a ground of dependence for the soul! It is the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, the one great Substitute for sinners, upon which we all must rely.

There, soul, if you have nothing else to depend upon, you have as much as I have, and if you do accept Jesus Christ to be your Savior, you have the same hope that I have. I will even dare to be bondsman for you, and to perish with you, if you can perish trusting in Christ, but that can never be. As this blessed Book is true, and as Christ ever lives, there is not a soul, that shall rely upon Him, whom He will not assuredly bless and pardon here below, and take to Himself to dwell in His bosom forever and ever in glory.

There you see what is the intent of the laying of the hand upon the head of the sin offering. If you have been helped to follow me thus far, if you have really laid your hand upon Christ, I bless and praise the name of the Lord.

II. Now I have only a few minutes left for speaking, in the second place, upon THE SIMPLICITY OF THIS SYMBOL.

What was required was just the laying of the hand of the offerer upon the victim's head, that and nothing more.

Notice that *there was no preparatory ceremony*. There was the animal provided for a sacrifice, just as God has provided our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to be the Lamb of God, and the one thing to be done was for the sinner to lay his hand upon the head of the sacrifice. In like manner, there is no preliminary ceremony needed before coming to Christ. This is the first thing, sinner, that you have to do—to come, and lay your hand upon Him and say, “He is mine.”

“But must I not be prepared in a certain way, so that I may come to Him aright? Must I not do, or feel, or be something?” No, the cross is at the head of the way of life, it is the true wicket gate which leads unto everlasting life. Believing in Jesus is the first thing you have to do, you live not until you believe in Him. Come, then, to Jesus, come now, the first thing for you to do is to accept Him as your Substitute, and to rely wholly upon Him.

You also perceive, dear friends, that the hand that was to be laid upon the head of the sacrifice *had nothing in it*. The man who came thus to confess his guilt, did not bring a silver shekel or talent of gold in his hand. That was not at all necessary. All he had to do was to lay his hand upon the sin offering, and in like manner, you must say, with Toplady—

*“Nothing in my hand I bring:
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”*

And as there was to be nothing in the hand of the sinner, so *there was to be nothing on his hand*. If he had a dozen diamond rings on his fingers, he could not lay his hand on the bullock's head any the better. He who had no ornament at all could do it just as well, and if you have no virtues, no excellences—if you are poor, if you are illiterate, if you have even lost your character, if your hand is a foul hand, a black hand, yet if you do lay it, by faith, upon the head of Jesus Christ, if you do take Him to be your Savior, you have made the all-important decision.

“’Tis done, the great transaction's done.”

You are your Lord's, and He is yours, for “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” He has it already in present possession, so let him go in peace, rejoicing in the blessing that he has received from the Substitute and Savior.

Observe too, that *there was nothing to be done with that hand* except to lay it on the head of the sacrifice. There were to be no mystic crossings or moving to and fro, no cunning legerdemain, but the sinner was just to lay his hand upon the head of the animal that was to die as his substitute. You know that in the Revelation, the woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, that is, the Church of Rome, has upon her forehead the name Mystery, and you probably recollect what follows, “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots.” But the chaste bride of Christ, the church which He has redeemed by His blood, is not a

partaker of that mystery, and Christ, in the Gospel, gives us nothing but simplicities. As the laying of the hand on the head of the sacrifice, was all that was needed for the forgiveness of the sinner under the law, so all that you need now is to take Christ to be your Substitute and Savior.

Therefore, by the eternity of bliss or woe which depends upon your decision, in the name of God, who has sent me to proclaim His Gospel, I demand of you, man or woman, that you should come to the right decision upon this all-important matter. Let there be no putting off, and no offering to do something else, what is required is that you should lay your hand, by faith, on the head of the sin-atoning Lamb of God. Have you done so? If not, you have neither part nor lot in Him, and if you remain in your present condition, you will perish in your sin. But if you will accept Christ as your Substitute, you need no earthly priest or mediator. So, take Him as yours.

“Take Him now, and happy be.”

The symbol was one of extreme simplicity, for, finally, *there was nothing to be done to the man's hand*. The priest was not to wash it, or to read the lines upon it by the aid of palmistry, or to tattoo it with some sacred sign. No, the man came, recollect, because he was a sinner, and he laid his hand on the sacrifice because he was a sinner. The hand that he laid there was a sinner's hand, and I believe in Jesus Christ with a sinner's faith. I say to Him, at this moment, as I said when first I trusted Him—

*“Just as I am—without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.”*

Do not come to Christ as saints, come as sinners. Come just as you are, sinful, vile, and polluted, and lay the hand of simple yet trembling confidence upon the head of Jesus and say, “He shall be mine.” If you come to Him thus, He will not refuse or reject you, for He has said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”

There are some of you who have been here a long time, and you are not yet converted. If you go to hell, I am clear of your blood. Often have I wept over you when preaching here, and I have set Christ before you as the one only and open door of salvation, and I have entreated and besought you to enter, but if you will not enter, I can do no more, the rest must lie with yourselves. You will melt the wax that seals your own death warrant.

The responsibility rests wholly upon you, lay it not upon God. If any man is saved, it is of God's grace and God's grace alone, but if any man is lost, it is by his own free will and his free will alone. The will of man is the source of damnation, the will of God is the source of salvation. Both those statements are true, therefore, if you reject the Gospel of the grace of God, you bring upon yourselves the just punishment of your sin.

I do not know that I can say any more upon this theme except just this. There may be someone who is saying, “This plan of salvation is too simple.” Surely, you will not quarrel with it on that account. I warrant you that if a man were going to be hanged, and he could be delivered simply by accepting a free pardon, he would not say that such a plan was too simple. After all, the best things in the world are very simple. If I want to go from here to Glasgow, it is a simple method that I have to follow. I have to get to the proper railway station, take my ticket, and enter the right carriage, then, if all goes well, I shall get there all right.

If I want to go to heaven, it is just as simple. I go by faith to Christ, and trust myself wholly to Him, and so I get there. It is really a matter of trust when you enter a railway carriage, and you reach your destination by a power above your own. If I want to communicate with a friend at the very ends of the earth, I have nothing to do but to step into a telegraph office, write down what I want to say, pay the proper charge, and the message will go all right. Though I cannot trace the wire which connects the

office with my distant friend, I know that he will get my cablegram in due course. There may be some mystery about the matter, yet practically, it is a very simple thing, and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is just as simple as that.

If a farmer wants a harvest, all the philosophers in the world cannot tell him how wheat grows, nor can they make it grow, he has only to drop his seed into the earth at the right time, and it will grow by night and by day, though he knows not how. Therefore, act in the same simple, common sense fashion. Leave off inquiring into mysteries which you cannot understand. and puzzling over difficulties which your poor brain cannot comprehend.

*“Let artful doubts and reasonings be
Nailed with Jesus to the tree;”—*

and do you, as a little child, fully trust Jesus as your Savior, and so you shall be saved. God help you to do this now, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

ISAIAH 53

Verse 1. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?*

It is sometimes the lot of God’s most faithful servants to labor unsuccessfully. As old Thomas Fuller quaintly says, “He makes some to be as the clouds that empty their rain over Arabia the stony while others are pouring down their showers over Arabia the happy.” Yet we are accepted with God, not according to our success, but according to our faithfulness. Still, no true minister of Christ can be contented unless men believe his report. It will be a matter for sighing and groaning if unbelief be the only answer to our earnest declarations concerning Christ.

2. *For he—*

That is, Jesus—

2. *Shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.*

Carnal minds are unbelieving minds. They are so because the beauties of Christ are spiritual, and in their natural state they have not the power to discern them. Jesus Christ has no loveliness in the eyes of self-righteous, self-sufficient men. What do they want with a Savior? What do they care for His atoning sacrifice? They cannot truly admire the love and the holiness of Jesus Christ, for they do not know their own unloveliness or their own unholiness. Alas! that God’s own Son, who is the loveliest of all beings, should be without form or comeliness to unspiritual eyes.

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

While the Redeemer was here below, His state of poverty, obscurity, suffering, and shame, was of such a character that few would believe in Him, and even those, who afterwards received Him, at the first did not so. He was despised, and we, even we, His own people, esteemed Him not. Christ has forgiven us for all this, but shall we ever forgive ourselves? O eyes, shall you ever cease to weep over your former blindness? O heart, shall you ever cease to grieve over your former hardness? He, who was heaven’s darling was despised and rejected of men, and we partook in the guilt, for we also despised and rejected Him.

4-5. *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

It is substitution, you see, all through—Christ suffering instead of us—the Innocent dying for the guilty—the Lord of glory bearing the sin of rebellious men. Why do men cavil at this precious truth? It is their only hope of salvation. Why do we still have to say, “Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” But those who are enlightened from above, and led to see their own state of ruin, and their absolute need of a Savior, will rejoice to know that the Lord has laid help upon One who is mighty, and that He has anointed His only begotten Son to stand in our place.

6. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

There is a universal sin, “All we like sheep have gone astray.” There is also a personal sin, a sin peculiar to each individual, “We have turned every one to his own way.” But Christ gathers up the sin—all kinds of sin of all sorts of men, and of His whole church it is truly said, “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

7. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth:

When a word could have released Him, He would not speak it. His was indeed golden silence. Oh, the wondrous eloquence of that patient speechlessness when He stood before Herod and Pilate, and answered them not a word! He could have spoken with such authority as to have called legions of angels from heaven for His protection, or a single word of His could have destroyed His enemies, as the leaves of autumn lie withered and dead, but “He opened not his mouth.”

7-8. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison, and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation?

Who shall speak up for Him? It was the custom of the Jews, when a man was condemned to death, to allow a certain interval, during which the heralds went through the streets, and made proclamation that if any man knew any reason why the criminal should be spared, he should at once appear at the court and declare it. Someone often came forward with one plea or another, in arrest of judgment, but when our Lord was condemned to death, none would speak up for Him.

8-9. For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked,—

Dying between two thieves, as though He had been the greatest criminal of the three, “He made his grave with the wicked,”—

9. And with the rich in his death;

Lying in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea.

9. Because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

If He had used either violence or deceit, He might have escaped, but because He was harmless and true, therefore must He die.

10. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed,—

The grain of wheat, sown in the ground, abides not alone, but brings forth much fruit. Our blessed Savior presented both soul and body as an offering for sin, but He knew what He was doing, for “He shall see his seed.”

10. He shall prolong his days,—

Up from the grave did He arise in newness of life, and back to heaven did He return to life immortal, “He shall prolong His days,”—

10-11. And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.

Christ did not die in vain. He will never miss the great object of His death, you may depend upon that. Those drops of blood are far too precious to fall in vain upon the earth.

11. By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;

That is, by their knowledge of Him, by their trusting Him, many shall be justified and saved.

11. *For he shall bear their iniquities.*

How very express this is—that Christ does not merely bear the punishment of His people, but their iniquities too! There is a literal substitution of Christ in the place of His people, and a most distinct imputation of their sin to Him, and of His righteousness to them.

12. *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Blessed Intercessor, let Your almighty intercession avail for each one of us, for Your own name's sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.